

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W
-----043236 311259Z /42
O 311240Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 5248
WHITEHOUSE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 TEL AVIV 11474

EXDIS DISTRIBUTE AS NODIS

NEA FOR ASST SEC SAUNDERS AND AMBASSADOR LEWIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, MOPS, LE, SY, IS
SUBJECT: LEBANON

REFS: A) STATE 221462, B) DAMASCUS 5090

1. I CALLED BEGIN AT HOME AT 0710 AUGUST 31 TO ALERT HIM THAT I HAD RECEIVED INSTRUCTIONS FROM WASHINGTON OVER-NIGHT AND ASKED TO MEET WITH HIM AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE IN THE DAY. WE SUBSEQUENTLY MET AT 0930 IN HIS OFFICE. HIS AIDE, YEHUDA AVNER, AND BLACKWILL WERE ALSO PRESENT.

2. STRESSING THAT BEGIN'S CONCERNS OVER THE SITUATION IN LEBANON HAD BEEN COMMUNICATED TO THE PRESIDENT AND THE SECRETARY, I WENT OVER WITH HIM IN DETAIL TALKING POINTS IN REFTEL (A), DREW SELECTIVELY ON REPORT IN REFTEL (B) OF AMBASSADOR SEELYE'S CONVERSATION WITH QADDOUR, AND SAID DRAPER HAD MADE SIMILAR DEMARCHE TO SYRIAN CHARGE IN
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WASHINGTON.

3. BEGIN LISTENED INTENTLY TO MY PRESENTATION NODDING HIS HEAD FREQUENTLY AND, WHEN I DESCRIBED GENERAL CONTENT OF SECRETARY'S MESSAGE TO ASSAD, INTERRUPTING TO SAY "GLAD TO HEAR THAT." HE WAS PARTICULARLY PLEASED WITH U.S. REQUEST TO ASSAD TO BRING ABOUT AN IMMEDIATE CEASE-

FIRE AND STANDFAST OF SYRIAN FORCES. IF THAT CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED, BEGIN SAID, THE GOI WOULD GET IN TOUCH WITH THE CHRISTIANS AND TRY TO CONVINCE THEM TO ACT WITH THE SAME RESTRAINT. SHOULD THE SYRIANS AND THE CHRISTIANS BOTH AGREE TO A CEASEFIRE, THAT COULD BE EXPRESSED IN A PUBLIC STATEMENT, PERHAPS IN LEBANON, OR PERHAPS IN WASHINGTON. BUT SPEED WAS OF THE ESSENCE. BEGIN NOTED THAT YESTERDAY TWELVE SYRIAN PLANES HAD ATTEMPTED TO ATTACK TWO ISRAELI RECONNAISSANCE AIRCRAFT OVER LEBANON (DETAILS ARE BEING REPORTED THROUGH DAO CHANNEL). THE LONGER THE CURRENT SITUATION PERSISTED, THE MORE LIKELY THAT ESCALATION WOULD OCCUR. THEREFORE, BEGIN SAID, IT WAS CRITICAL THAT ASSAD RESPOND TO THE SECRETARY'S MESSAGE QUICKLY - TODAY IF POSSIBLE.

4. BEGIN CONTINUED THAT HE WAS BEING PRESSURED BY THE KNESSET TO DO MORE IN LEBANON THAN HE WANTED TO DO. HE OBSERVED THAT "ALTHOUGH IT IS EASY TO SEND TROOPS, ONE CANNOT FORECAST THE RESULT OF SUCH AN ACTION." THEREFORE, THE GOI WAS BEING VERY CAREFUL. BUT EVERYONE SHOULD UNDERSTAND THAT ISRAEL CANNOT TOLERATE A SITUATION IN WHICH THE CHRISTIANS ARE WIPED OUT. THAT PRINCIPLE IS AXIOMATIC WITH BOTH THE GOVERNMENT AND THE OPPOSITION.

5. I THEN SAID THAT THE U.S. NEEDED THE PRIME MINISTER'S HELP ON TWO PARTICULAR POINTS. THE PRESS REPORTS IN IS-
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RAEL YESTERDAY THAT WASHINGTON WAS TRANSMITTING A WARNING TO SYRIA MADE OUR TASK OF INFLUENCING THE SYRIANS PRIVATELY MORE DIFFICULT. BEGIN IMMEDIATELY SAID THAT THOSE PRESS REPORTS WERE "STUPID." HE HAD PERSONALLY WRITTEN THE COMMUNIQUE AFTER OUR MEETING YESTERDAY AND IT HAD SIMPLY INDICATED THAT WE HAD DISCUSSED THE AGGRAVATING SITUATION IN LEBANON. THE PRESS HAD MADE UP THE REST. HE HAD GIVEN A SPEECH LAST NIGHT IN WHICH HE HAD MENTIONED LEBANON AND WOULD GIVE ANOTHER TONIGHT. BUT HE WOULD ONLY SAY THAT IT WAS A SERIOUS SITUATION AND, OF COURSE, WOULD NOT DIVULGE ANYTHING ABOUT PRIVATE COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN THE ISRAELI AND U.S. GOVERNMENTS.

6. FINALLY, I STRESSED THAT THE U.S. HOPED THAT ISRAEL WOULD EXERCISE MAXIMUM FORBEARANCE AND PRUDENCE WITH REGARD TO ITS RECONNAISSANCE FLIGHTS OVER LEBANESE TERRITORY AND THAT THESE FLIGHTS WOULD BE ARRANGED AT TIMES AND IN WAYS WHICH WOULD NOT BE PROVOCATIVE TO THE SYRIANS. BEGIN RESPONDED, "SO WE SHALL DO." HE SAID THAT I COULD INFORM WASHINGTON THAT HE HAD GIVEN A POSITIVE RESPONSE TO BOTH OUR REQUESTS.

7. IN CONCLUDING THE CONVERSATION, THE PRIME MINISTER SAID HE WAS VERY GRATEFUL FOR THE SWIFT U.S. ACTION AND WOULD INFORM DAYAN AND WEIZMAN OF THIS CONVERSATION. WASHINGTON HAD FULFILLED HIS REQUEST COMPLETELY. WE NOW HAD TO WAIT TO SEE IF SYRIA WOULD AGREE TO THE U.S. SUGGESTIONS, WHICH "WERE COMPLETELY JUSTIFIED." BEGIN ASKED ME TO CALL HIM IMMEDIATELY AS SOON AS I RECEIVED ANY WORD CONCERNING ASSAD'S RESPONSE, WHICH HE HOPED WOULD BE TODAY, AND STRESSED THAT THAT INCLUDED SHABBAT SINCE LIVES WERE AT STAKE. HE SUGGESTED THAT WE MIGHT

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S E C R E T SECTION 02 OF 02 TEL AVIV 11474

EXDIS DISTRIBUTE AS NODIS

FOLLOW-UP WITH AMB. SEELYE'S CONTACT IN DAMASCUS IF THE SYRIANS HAD NOT RESPONDED BY NOON TODAY. I SAID NOTHING ON THIS POINT, BUT TOLD HIM THAT I WOULD BE BACK IN TOUCH AS SOON AS I HAD ANYTHING FURTHER TO REPORT.

8. COMMENT: BEGIN WAS GRATEFUL AND VISIBLY IMPRESSED WITH THE SPEED AND SUBSTANCE OF OUR MESSAGE TO ASSAD. HE ADVERTED, AS HE HAD DONE YESTERDAY, TO THE NEED TO CALM THE SITUATION IN LEBANON SO THAT IT WOULD NOT DETRACT FROM THE CAMP DAVID TALKS. HART

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